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# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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# MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Cover: Bald Eagle at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, March 28, 1981. Photo by Bob Ringler.



## HAWK PREDATION ON RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

BROOKE MEANLEY

On September 10, 1986, I was observing a flock of approximately 5,000 Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) feeding on Wildrice (*Zizania aquatica*) along a tidal section of the Patuxent River opposite Jug Bay. From sample counts of the population I estimated that 80 percent of the Redwings were females. At 3:30 p.m. EDT, A Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) flew out of the woods behind where I was stationed and took a female Redwing from near the top of a stalk of Wildrice where it has been feeding. As the hawk approached the flock, most of the blackbirds arose and began leaving the marsh. Approximately 10 seconds after the first hawk took a bird, a second Cooper's Hawk flew out of the woods and took another female Redwing. I had been in the same areas the two previous days and saw a Cooper's Hawk each day; and again a day after the capture incident.

Since the large flock continued to feed in the same section of marsh day after day, the Cooper's Hawks remained in the nearby woods and probably took birds whenever they were inclined to do so, and with very little effort. One day as one of the hawks flew over the feeding flock, a number of the birds simply dropped to the ground where they would have been easy prey. They are of course more vulnerable at this time of the year than at any other season because they are in heavy molt, with some flight and tail feathers missing and thus have a more labored flight.

Red-shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*) also live in the woods bordering the marsh, and while they feed more on rodents, amphibians, and reptiles, occasionally they take a bird. On October 22, 1986, I was looking over a section of marsh near Hill's Bridge, approximately 2.5 miles up-river from Jug Bay, when a Red-shouldered Hawk came into my field of vision about 100 yards away, alighting in the top of a Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). About five minutes later it flew down into a patch of Halberd-leaf Tearthumb (*Polygonum arifolium*) and flew off with a male Redwing. According to A. K. Fisher in *The Hawks and Owls of the United States in Relation to Agriculture* (1893, U.S.D.A., Div. of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Bull. 3) in a series of 220 Red-shouldered Hawk stomachs examined, 142 contained small rodents, mostly mice, 92 insects, 59 reptiles and amphibians, 16 spiders, and 12 birds.

P.O. Box 87, Fishersville, VA 22939

# MARYLAND/D.C. ATLAS RIGHT ON TARGET

EIRIK A. T. BLOM

At the close of the fourth year of field work, the Atlas project was still progressing on schedule. All blocks in the District of Columbia and nearly all of those in Maryland have received some coverage and the big job for the fifth and final summer will be to seek out those blocks that still have small species totals or too many species in the Possible category.

Thanks to the programming expertise of Mark Hoffman, we now have computer-generated progress maps for all breeding species. Although these preliminary maps are distorted vertically, they do show exactly what has been entered into the State computer. We are using these maps for catching errors that have escaped the early editing procedures, and for establishing priorities for coverage in the final year.

Up to now the Northern Shoveler is the only new breeding species to be positively confirmed for Maryland on the basis of the Atlas. A female was found escorting a brood of young in Dorchester County by Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge personnel. This species has been nesting in Delaware for many years and we knew it was only a matter of time before it would be confirmed for Maryland.

I'll use samples of the 1983-1986 maps to illustrate some of the more impressive Atlas discoveries to date.

The expansion of nesting Canada Geese, from captive populations at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel and from flocks at Blackwater Refuge and other waterfowl sites, has been phenomenal. No one would have anticipated that this species would be found in more than one-fifth of the Maryland blocks (Fig. 1).

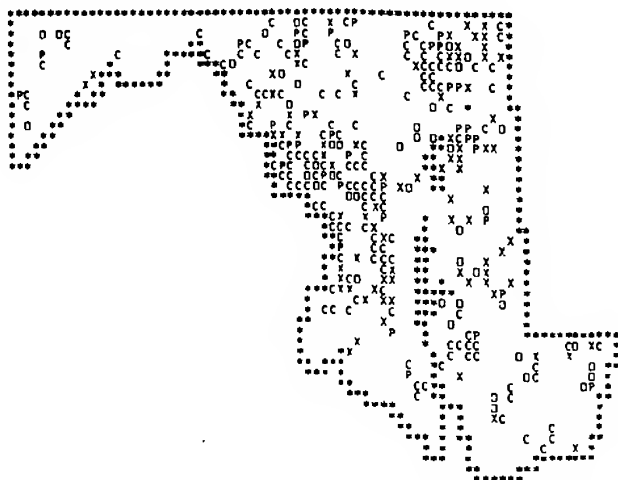


Fig. 1. Breeding distribution of Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) from 1983-86 Atlas data. C=Confirmed. P=Probable. X=Possible. O=Observed.

Cooper's Hawks have been found in every part of the State, and have been identified in about 140 blocks, or slightly better than one out of nine. The heavy cluster of observations in western Maryland (Fig. 2) is largely the work of Kim Titus, who was conducting his graduate research on raptors there during the Atlas period. He called the Cooper's Hawk the most common breeding raptor in western Maryland—to the surprise of most field observers, who would have thought the Cooper's would be outnumbered by the American Kestrel, Eastern Screech-Owl, Broad-winged Hawk, or Red-tailed Hawk.

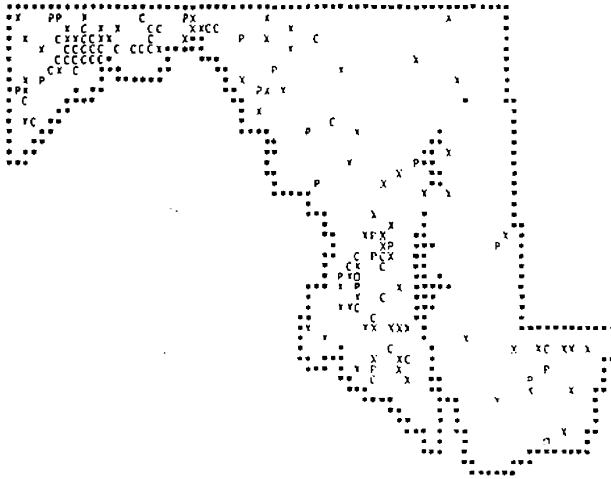


Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

A strong effort in Dorchester County by Sam Droege and others revealed that Northern Harriers (Fig. 3) are fairly common breeders in the marshes there. This species also made a good showing in the Worcester County marshes.

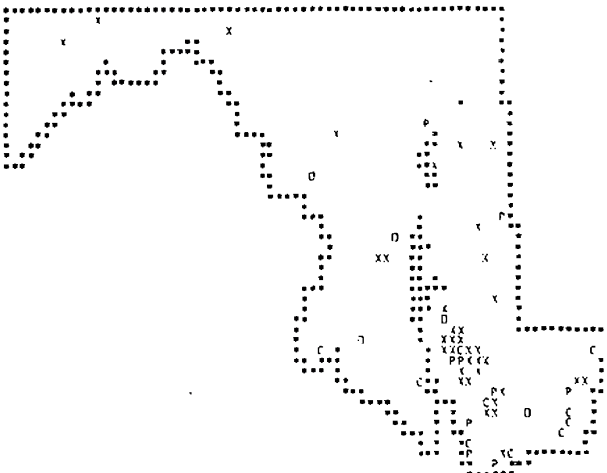


Fig. 3. Breeding distribution of Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Reports of Ruffed Grouse (Fig. 4) from the Maryland-Pennsylvania border in Harford and Cecil Counties were unexpected. Traditionally they have nested only in the four western counties.

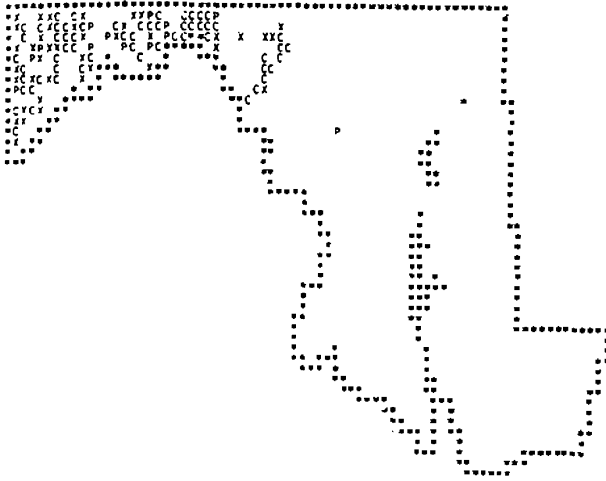


Fig. 4. Breeding distribution of Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Though the Frederick Valley around New Design Road has been the traditional place to see Upland Sandpipers, none have been found there during the Atlas period, leaving southern Garrett County the only breeding locality in Maryland (Fig. 5). Compare this map with the one showing distribution of the Upland Plover (as it was then called) and the Willet in 1958 (Fig. 6), as published in *Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* by Stewart and Robbins (North American Fauna 62, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service).



Fig. 5. Breeding distribution of Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

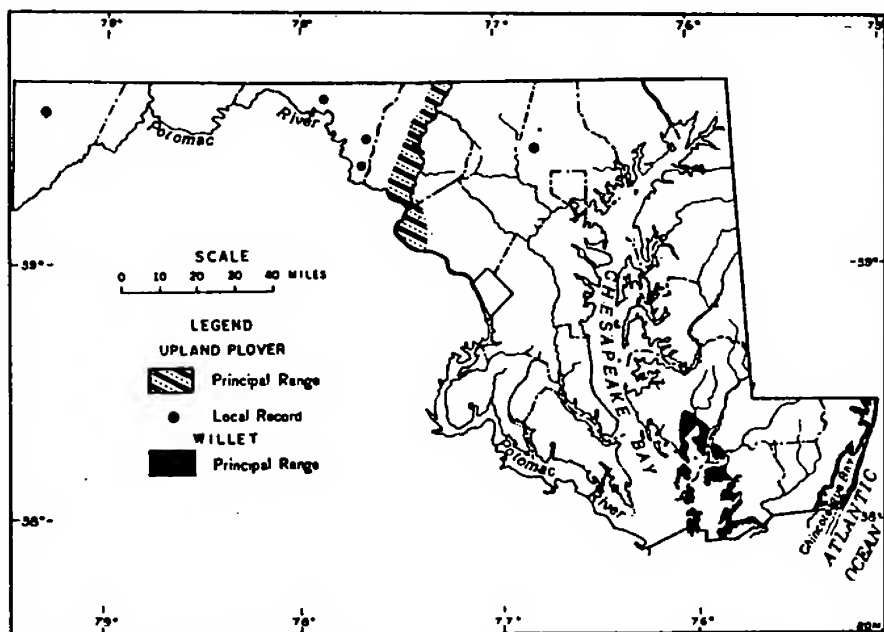


Fig. 6. Breeding distribution of Upland Sandpiper and Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) in 1958, from *Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* by Stewart and Robbins.

Northern Saw-whet Owls provided the most fascinating, but frustrating news. A foray in the early spring of 1986 revealed calling birds in several Garrett County bogs where they had not previously been found. This suggests that this little-known species may be more common in Garrett than previously thought. Enigmatic, however, was a juvenile picked up in mid-summer in an orchard near Frederick. Could Saw-whets be rare breeders east of the Allegheny Plateau?

Prior to the beginning of Atlas efforts, Brown Creepers were known to breed in only three scattered locations in Maryland: in Garrett County, at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Prince Georges County, and in Pocomoke State Forest on the lower Eastern Shore. The fact that these three locations span Maryland from west to east suggested that Brown Creepers might be found in any part of the State. The Atlas results confirm this, but in numbers we never dreamed of. They have now been found in more than 100 blocks! The concentrations are in Western Maryland (there has been a long established population in the southern Appalachians), along the Potomac River, and in Pocomoke State Forest. As the map (Fig. 7) clearly shows, they are not confined to these areas, however. The question for Atlasers is whether or not they were always here, or if this represents a recent spread. Brown Creepers are fairly secretive during the breeding season, and their song is both hard to hear and not entirely familiar to most birdwatchers. Even if the spread is fairly recent, it certainly went unnoticed until the beginning of Atlas work.

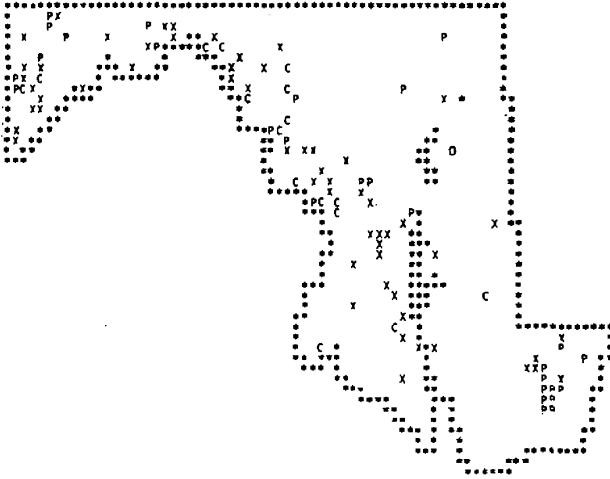


Fig. 7. Breeding distribution of Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Another surprise was the invasion of the Coastal Plain by Cedar Waxwings. They have been found breeding in many blocks in Southern Maryland and on the Eastern Shore—even on Assateague Island (Fig. 8). It is too early to tell whether this is a permanent range extension or a temporary phenomenon.



Fig. 8. Breeding distribution of Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.



The Blue-winged Warbler continues to expand westward into Allegany and Garrett Counties, the traditional stronghold of Golden-wings (Fig. 9). Unless the trend reverses, nesting Golden-wings in Maryland may be replaced by Blue-wings in 50 to 100 years. Compare Figure 9 with the 1958 distribution as depicted by Stewart and Robbins (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9. Breeding distribution of Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

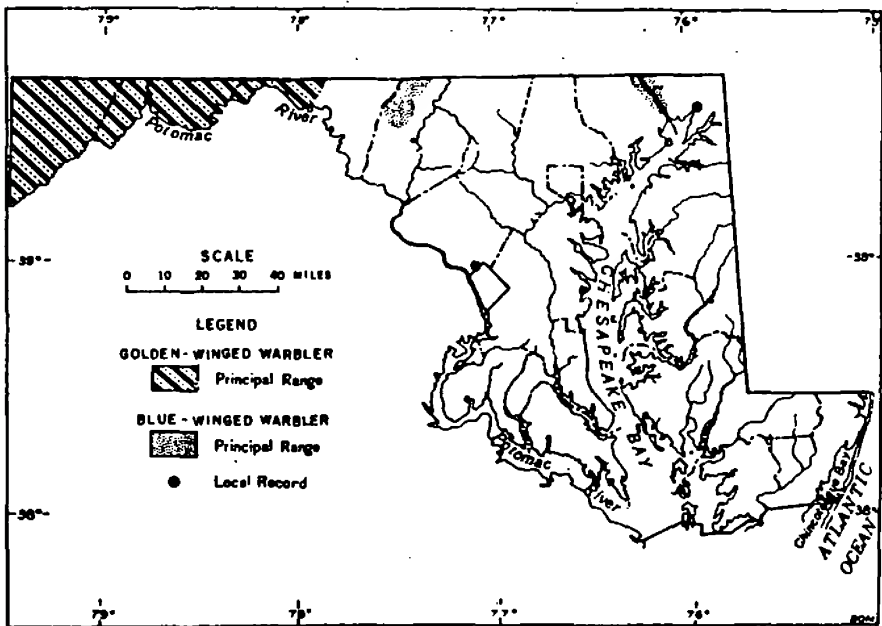


Fig. 10. Breeding distribution of Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) and Blue-winged Warbler in 1958, from Stewart and Robbins.

Yellow-throated Warblers were found up the Potomac River as far as western Allegany County. Garrett is now the only Maryland county without a breeding record (Fig. 11).

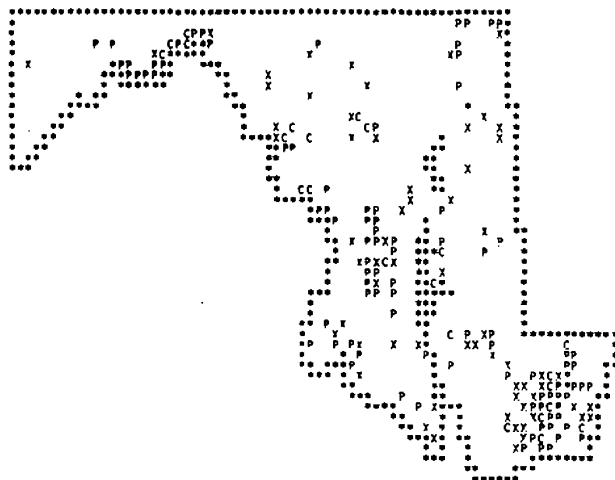


Fig. 11. Breeding distribution of Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Although Upland Sandpipers have abandoned the Frederick Valley, Dickcissels have not. We continue to find new pairs there. The big news about Dickcissels is that small numbers were found breeding on the central Eastern Shore (Fig. 12). These are the first breeding records ever for Maryland's Coastal Plain.



Fig. 12. Breeding distribution of Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

One of the most interesting and important discoveries of the Atlas Project concerns Swamp Sparrows. It also raises questions about the status and distribution of the two subspecies thought to breed in Maryland. Historically, Swamp Sparrows of the nominate race (*Melospiza g. georgiana*) have been known to breed in bogs in Garrett County. In 1951 a new race (*M. g. nigrescens*) was described from the Nanticoke River marshes in Wicomico County, Maryland, and marshes around Delaware Bay, by Gorman Bond and Robert Stewart (Wilson Bull. 63:38). Even before the start of field work it was strongly suspected that the Chesapeake populations were more extensive, and the Atlas has confirmed that Swamp Sparrows breed widely throughout the Bay marshes. It has been assumed that these birds represent the *nigrescens* subspecies.

Atlas work in the Piedmont has muddled the picture somewhat, however, as has the discovery that some birds breeding in the Chesapeake marshes do not fit the description of *nigrescens*. The discovery of Swamp Sparrows breeding in Montgomery, Howard, Carroll, and Frederick Counties was totally unexpected (Fig. 13), and raises interesting questions. Did these birds expand from Bay populations? From mountain populations? To which race do they belong? Could they be intermediate, and thus call into question the validity of Bay populations as a separate race? Only an intensive study of all three populations can resolve the problems; as a result of the Atlas discovery, an attempt is being made to initiate such a study.



Fig. 13. Breeding distribution of Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Atlas work continues to document the amazing spread of House Finches throughout Maryland. Maps from the first two years tended to show them clustered around urban centers, but the present map (Fig. 14) indicates that they are reaching even the less developed areas of the State, and may soon be one of the most widely distributed breeding birds in Maryland.

Among other species of special note are the first breeding attempts of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls and Common Terns at Hart-Miller Island in

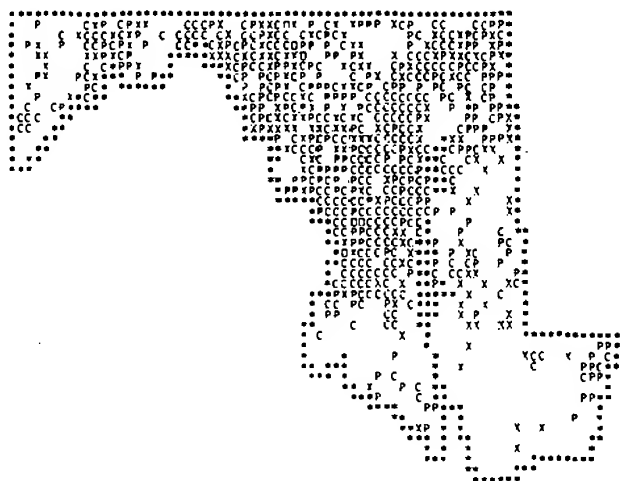
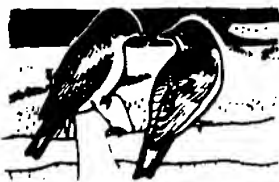


Fig. 14. Breeding distribution of House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) from 1983-86 Atlas data.

Baltimore County, a few Loggerhead Shrikes in Frederick County, a few new locations for the Swainson's Warbler in the southern portion of the Pocomoke Swamp, and some new locations for Henslow's Sparrows in Garrett and Allegany Counties.

What exciting finds will be revealed in the final Atlas year?

1618 Somerville Rd., Bel Air, MD 21014



## THE SEASON

**Breeding Season, June 1 - July 31, 1986**

**ROBERT F. RINGLER**

Severe drought conditions continued through the summer as seasonal thunderstorms did little to relieve the low water levels in reservoirs. Shorebirding was again rewarding at these locations. None of this seemed to affect the success of breeding birds, and progress on the Atlas continued with more of this report's notes coming from that effort. Good shorebird coverage was prominent at Ocean City, at Hart - Miller, which is the dredge spoil impoundment in Chesapeake Bay

in Baltimore County, at North West Creek by Tower Gardens on Kent Island, at North Branch in Allegany County, and at Liberty Reservoir in Carroll County.

*Observers:* George & Henry Armistead, Chris Beaton, Rick Blom, Larry Bonham, Jon K. Boone, Danny Bystrak, David Czaplak, Lynn Davidson, Ethel Engle, Roberta Fletcher (reporting for Caroline County), Harold Fogleman, Mark Garland, Marvin Hewitt, Robert Hilton, Hank Kaestner, Greg Kearns, Ray Kiddy, Dennis Kirkwood, Wayne Klockner, Walter Kraus, Dottie Mumford, Paul Nistico, Mariana Nuttle, Michael & Paul O'Brien, Paul Pisano, Kyle Rambo, Sue Ricciardi, Wilbur Rittenhouse, Barbara Ross, Ron Runkles, L.T. Short, Steve Simon, Teresa Simons, Jo Solem (reporting for Howard County), Jim Stasz, David Wallace, Mark Wallace, Robert Warfield, Erika Wilson, Mark Wright.

*Abbreviations:* WMA - Wildlife Management Area. A "+" after a name indicates there were other observers in addition to those named.

*Loons, Grebes.* Straggling Red-throated Loons were single birds at Jug Bay on May 29 to June 1 (Greg Kearns) and Ocean City on June 6 (Czaplak). There was a scattering of Common Loons this summer with 1 at Ocean City on June 6 (Czaplak), 1 on the June 7 pelagic trip (Wierenga +), 1 near Bellevue on July 5-6 (G. Armistead, Carl Perry) and 1 at Point Lookout on July 27 (Ringler, Stasz). Nesting of Pied-billed Grebes included 3 large young on a sand pit pond at the town of St. Martin in Worcester County on June 21 (Ringler), 4 adults and 1 downy young at Brandon Shores in northern Anne Arundel County on July 4 (Ringler) and 1 adult with 1 large young bird at Lilypons on July 26 (D. Wallace). Early migrant Pied-billed Grebes were 1 in juvenile plumage at Hart - Miller on July 20 (Ringler +) and 1 at Wilde Lake in Columbia on July 25 (Boone). A Horned Grebe was found at Hart - Miller from June 20 through July 5 (Ringler +).

*Pelagics, Pelicans.* Seen in Maryland waters during the June 7 pelagic trip from Ocean City were 9 Cory's Shearwaters, 13 Greater Shearwaters, 175 Wilson's Storm-Petrels and 1 Brown Pelican (Wierenga +). On June 29, about 9 miles off Ocean City, Fogleman reported seeing 7 Wilson's and 1 Leach's Storm-Petrel. Other sightings of Brown Pelicans at Ocean City were 15 on June 28 (Ringler), 2 on July 12 (Jack Schultz), 24 on July 17, 20 on July 26, 4 on July 29 (all 3 reports by Warfield) and 20 on July 30 (P. O'Brien). In Sinepuxent Bay, south of Ocean City, 5 pelicans were seen on June 24 (Robert Mains) and 1 on June 28 (Ringler).

*Cormorants.* An immature Great Cormorant, first seen at Hart - Miller on June 15, summered there (Blom +), the first such record for the state. Double-crested Cormorants are now well-established summering non-breeders in the state and the following is a list of some of these plus perhaps some late spring migrants or early fall migrants: 135 at Barren Island on June 1 (H. Armistead), 1 at Bloomington Lake in Garrett County on June 7 (Ringler +), 2 at Jug Bay on June 13 and 1 there on July 13 (Mumford, Beaton), 2 at Point Lookout on June 13 and 1 there on July 17 (Wilson), 1 at Lake Haven near Berlin and 1 at Ocean City on June 15 (Ringler), 8 in DC on June 18 (Czaplak), 1 at Ocean City on June 28 (Ringler), 16 at Brandon Shores on July 4 (Ringler), 1 at Point No Point on July 17 (Wilson), 250 being the high count of the flock summering at Hart - Miller on July 20 (Ringler +), 125 at Cove Point on July 27 (Stasz, Ringler, Blom) and 47 at

Rock Hall on July 30 (Gruber). Obviously Chesapeake Bay is the center for these summering birds and the Potomac River is a secondary site; there are very few if any on the coast.

**Hérons.** Wilson heard 1 **American Bittern** at Elliott on June 25, the only report this summer, while the best report of **Least Bittern** was 3 at Hart - Miller on July 13 (Ringler +). Simon saw 2 **Great Blue Herons** at Loch Raven from June 4 through July 22; however, it is not known if these were birds that nested locally and travelled long distances to feed, or were non-breeders. Post-breeding dispersal is probably responsible for the **Great Blue Heron** at North Branch in Allegany County on July 26 (Kiddy) and the 7 at Hughes Hollow on July 27 (Garland). **Great Egrets** are the most conspicuous of the post-breeding dispersants among the herons and this summer was no exception. However, 2 reports probably reflect wandering breeding birds as they precede significantly the normal dispersal time: 2 at Jug Bay on June 2 and 1 there on June 13 (Mumford, Beaton) and 1 at Point Lookout on June 13 (Wilson). The first post-breeding wanderer was 1 at Westport in Baltimore on July 4 (Ringler). In Howard County there were several sightings of single birds, perhaps the same or different birds, with 1 at Lime Kiln Pond on July 20 (M. Wallace), 1 at Jackson Pond in the Long Reach section of Columbia on July 22 (Cathy Williamson, Marcia Krishnamoorthy) and Wilde Lake in Columbia on July 25 (Boone). Other **Great Egret** sightings were 1 at Elms Park in St. Marys County on July 17 (Wilson) 5 in Carroll County at Liberty Reservoir on July 23 (Ringler) and 10 at Hughes Hollow on July 27 (Garland). **Wandering Snowy Egrets** were single birds at Hart-Miller on June 1 and 20 (Ringler +) and at Point Lookout on June 13 and July 17 (Wilson) while post-breeding dispersal brought 1 to Masonville in Baltimore on July 4 (Ringler) and 10 to Tower Gardens on July 13 (Ricciardi). **Dispersing Little Blue Herons** were few in number but an adult and an immature were at Tower Gardens on July 13 (Ricciardi), an immature at Lilypons on July 19 (M. O'Brien), 1 at Hughes Hollow on July 27 (Garland) and an immature at Cove Point on July 27 (Blom, Stasz, Ringler). A **Tricolored Heron** was also at Tower Gardens, July 13-26 (Ricciardi). **Wandering Cattle Egrets** were 1 near Clarksville on June 4-11 and 6 there on June 18 (M. Wallace), 7 at Chestertown on July 2 (Gruber), 1 at Tower Gardens on July 20 (Ricciardi) and 2 at Scotland in St. Marys County on July 27 (Ringler, Stasz, Blom). Pisano found 3 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at LBJ Park on July 16 and 2 spent the summer at Hart-Miller (Ringler +) where there is no evidence of nesting. Simon saw 1 **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** at Loch Raven on June 13, an adult was at Jug Bay on June 21 (Kearns) and Lars Nelson reported an adult at Swain's Lock on the C & O Canal in Montgomery County on July 13.

**Ibises.** The only **White Ibis** of the season was an immature in Carroll County at Liberty Reservoir on July 20 (Geraldine Newton, Melinda Byrd). Reports of **Glossy Ibis** outside the breeding range included 1 at Hawkins Point in Baltimore on June 20 and 1 nearby at Brandon Shores on July 4 (both Ringler), 1 at Hart-Miller on July 13 (Ringler +) and 4 at Tower Gardens on July 20 (Ricciardi).

**Swans and Geese.** Armistead counted 91 **Mute Swans** on June 1 at Barren Island, that species' stronghold in Dorchester County. A pair of **Mute Swans** raised 2 young, first reported on June 25 by Jack Abbott, in the pool at the east end of the Bay Bridge despite the summertime traffic. **Wandering Mute Swans**

were an adult at Cornfield Harbor in St. Marys County on June 13 (Wilson) and 2 at West Ocean City on July 27 + (Warfield). An adult Snow Goose was with a family of Canada Geese, including 2 downy young of the latter, on a pond at Rehobeth in Somerset County on June 22 (Ringler) and an immature flew into the impoundment at Hart - Miller on July 13 (Ringler +). Adult Canada Geese with young were seen in two locations in Worcester County on June 14 (Ringler). Miscellaneous sightings of Canada Geese, none of which appeared to represent nesting at this time were 1 at Patuxent River Park on June 14 and 1 at Bucktown in Dorchester County on June 25 (both Wilson), 9 at Jug Bay on July 13 (Mumford, Beaton) and 3 at Cove Point on July 27 (Stasz, Blom, Ringler) while a post-breeding congregation of 109 was at Loch Raven on July 22 (Simon).

*Dabbling Ducks.* Green-winged Teal are not known to breed in the state but 2 were at Elliott on July 5 (Armisteads, Alice Jones) and 1 on July 15 (Richard Edwards). Unusual in the Piedmont were 6 American Black Ducks at Piney Run on July 12 (Ringler). The peak count of Mallards, including many young, at Hart - Miller was 250 on June 15 (Blom +). A Northern Pintail was among the odd assortment of ducks that summered at least part of the season at Hart - Miller. It was present June 1-20, with 2 Blue-winged Teal there on June 29 and a female Gadwall there on July 20 (Ringler +). A female Blue-winged Teal with 10 downy young was at Deal Island WMA on June 22 (Ringler). Other reports of Blue-wings, all of which represent post-breeding dispersal or fall migration, were a pair at Bishopville in Worcester County on June 21 and a drake at Hurlock the next day (both Ringler), 8 at North Branch on July 11 (Simons) and a drake at Piney Run on July 19 (Ringler).

*Diving Ducks.* Summering diving ducks at Hart - Miller were a Canvasback from June 1 on, a drake Greater Scaup from June 20, several Lesser Scaup from July 13, 2 Common Goldeneyes on June 8 with 1 through June 29, a female Hooded Merganser on June 1, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers through June 20 with 1 continuing through the end of the period, and Ruddy Ducks with a high count of 15 on June 8 (Ringler +). Other summering divers were up to 4 Canvasbacks at Lake Haven near Berlin through June 28 (Ringler +), an immature male Black Scoter at Ocean City through June 28 (Ringler), a Red-breasted Merganser at Swan Point in Kent County on June 5 (Gruber) and additional Ruddy Ducks with 3 drakes at Hurlock on June 15 and 1 remaining through June 28 (Ringler), a drake at Mattaponi Creek on June 18 (Kearns +), and 2 drakes at Easton on June 28 (Ringler).

*Hawks.* Mumford and Beaton found 10 Ospreys at Jug Bay on July 13. Interesting reports of Bald Eagles were an immature over the Youghiogheny River in Garrett County on July 5 and an adult there the next day (Thayer), an adult near Elkridge in Howard County on July 12 (John & Eleanor Frasier) and an adult at Pooles Island on July 31 (Ringler +). Summer sightings of Northern Harriers away from known nesting areas were 1 in Howard County on June 10 (M. Wallace), a sub-adult male north of Easton on June 26 (M. O'Brien) and 1 on Pooles Island on July 31 (Ringler +). A Cooper's Hawk on Trent Hall Road in St. Marys County on July 17 (Wilson) was a rarity there. Woody Martin reported that Red-shouldered Hawks had their best nesting season of the last 5 years along the Patuxent River. Another rarity in southern Maryland was a Broad-winged Hawk at Bryans Road in Charles County on July 2-13 (Nistico). The 3



**American Kestrels** that Reese found at Tilghman on July 31 were probably early fall migrants. Richard Edwards saw a **Peregrine Falcon** on July 15 at Elliott, not far from the local nest site at Clay Island.

*Turkeys, Rails, Moorhens and Coots.* **Wild Turkeys**, probably released by the state, were seen at Idylwild WMA near Federalsburg during June and July (Inez Glim). Simons found 2 **Virginia Rails** at Pinto Marsh on June 8 before the severe drought decreased the water level there. An adult **Common Moorhen** with 5 small downy young was at Deal Island WMA on June 15, 3 adults were at Brandon Shores and an adult with 1 downy young was at Masonville on July 4 (all Ringler) and 1 was in the marsh at Tanyard, June 16 through July 21 (Engle). Summering, and presumably non-breeding, **American Coots** were 1 at Hart - Miller from June 20 through July 13 and at least 1 again at the Lake Haven pond near Berlin through June 28 (Ringler +).

*Plovers, Stilts and Avocets.* Straggling **Black-bellied Plovers** were 4 at Ocean City on June 21 (Ringler) and 1 at Hart - Miller on June 29 (Ringler +). Late spring **Semipalmated Plovers** included birds in Calvert County on June 4 (Stasz), 4 at Hart - Miller on June 20 (Ringler +) and 1 at Ocean City on June 21 (Ringler). **Killdeer** begin flocking in mid-summer and 25 were noted at Liberty Reservoir on July 6 (Ringler) and 47 at Summit Hall Turf Farm on July 27 (Hilton). A pair of **Black-necked Stilts** showing very aggressive behavior toward birders were seen at Deal Island WMA through June 15 (many observers) and 1 bird was at Hart - Miller on May 25 and June 1 (Kaestner +). Also at Hart - Miller from May 25 through July 5 were 8 breeding-plumaged **American Avocets** (Ringler +), non-breeders and apparently all males. Their early July departure matches the normal fall migration time for this species.

*Tringine Sandpipers, Curlews and Godwits.* A mixture of late spring and early fall **Greater Yellowlegs** included 1 in Calvert County on June 4 (Stasz), 1 at Point Lookout on June 13 (Wilson), 1 at Hart - Miller through June 20 and 2 there on July 5 (Ringler +) and on June 28 1 at Deal Island WMA and 3 at Hurlock (Ringler). Early fall **Lesser Yellowlegs** were 15 at Hart - Miller on June 29 (Ringler +), 1 at Triadelphia on July 10 (M. Wallace), 2 at Tower Gardens on July 13 and 100 there on July 26 (Ricciardi). A **Solitary Sandpiper** on the Monocacy River near Crewe's Mill in Frederick County on June 1 (Elinor and Stauffer Miller) was a very late spring bird, whereas the first returning southbound birds were 3 at Liberty Reservoir on July 12 (Ringler), 4 at North Branch on July 13 (Simons), 1 at Tower Gardens on July 13 (Ricciardi) and 1 at Triadelphia on July 14 (Chestem). Two sets of 2 downy young **Willetts** at Deal Island WMA and a nest with 4 eggs at Fairmount WMA were seen on June 15 (Ringler). A **Willet** at Cornfield Harbor in St. Marys County on June 13 (Wilson) may be a rare western shore breeder. Migrating **Willetts** were noted at West Ocean City on July 3 (Warfield) and 1 at Hart - Miller on July 5 (Ringler +). The extremes for spring and fall **Spotted Sandpipers** were 1 in Calvert County on June 5 (Stasz) and 2 at Liberty Reservoir on July 6 (Ringler), whereas 1 at Hurlock on June 22 in partial breeding plumage (Ringler) probably represents a non-breeding summering bird. The high count for **Spotted Sandpipers** was 30 on July 13 at Hart-Miller, where nesting birds as well as migrants could occur at that time (Ringler +). **Upland Sandpipers**, all of which were probably fall migrants, were 1 at Sandy Point on July 1 (M. O'Brien), 2 flying over Tuckahoe Creek south of Ridgely on July 22 (M.



O'Brien, Chan Robbins) and 1 in Queen Annes County near Tuckahoe State Park on July 27 (Rittenhouse). Single **Whimbrels** were on Assateague on June 6 (Klockner), at Hart - Miller on June 15 (Blom +) and another there on July 5 (Ringler, Stasz). A rarity for this season was a **Hudsonian Godwit** at Hart - Miller on June 1 (Ringler +).

*Turnstones and Calidridine Sandpipers.* Other late spring birds at Hart - Miller were a **Ruddy Turnstone** and 3 **Red Knots** on June 15 (Blom +). A **Red Knot** in Ocean City on June 6 (Czaplak) was typical there and the first fall migrant was at Hart - Miller on July 27 (Ringler +). The first fall **Sanderlings** were 1 at Hart - Miller on July 5 (Ringler +) and 1 at Tower Gardens on July 13 (Ricciardi). Stasz saw his last **Semipalmated Sandpipers** in Calvert County on June 16, and 25 were still at Hart - Miller on June 20 (Ringler, Blom); 7 fall migrants were at Point Lookout on July 17 (Wilson). A **Western Sandpiper** at Hart - Miller on June 15 (Blom +) was exceptional before fall migration, which typically begins about three weeks later. A **Least Sandpiper** in Calvert County on June 4 (Stasz) was late for the spring, whereas southbound migrants were 27 at Hart - Miller on June 29 (Ringler +), 6 at Liberty Reservoir on July 6 (Ringler) and 6 at North Branch on July 13 (Simons, Kiddy). Spring migrant **White-rumped Sandpipers** included 2 at Deal Island WMA on June 6 (Czaplak), 1 in Calvert County on June 14 (Stasz), 60 at Hart - Miller on June 8 (Kaestner +) and 7 there on June 20 (Blom, Ringler), 22 at Ocean City on June 15 and 1 there on June 21 (Ringler). The first **Pectoral Sandpiper** of the fall was at Liberty Reservoir on July 19 (Ringler). Also among the late spring birds at Hart - Miller were 2 **Dunlins** on June 20 (Ringler, Blom); an early fall bird there was a **Stilt Sandpiper** on July 5 (Ringler +). Ricciardi found 5 **Stilt Sandpipers** at Tower Gardens on July 26. A **Ruff** at Hart - Miller on June 1 (Stasz +) was odd for that time of the year.

*Dowitchers, Phalaropes.* The last of the spring **Short-billed Dowitchers** were in Calvert County on June 14 (Stasz), 5 at Hart - Miller on June 15 (Blom +) and 8 at Ocean City on June 21 (Ringler), and returning fall birds were 1 at North Branch on July 13 (Simons, Kiddy), 5 at Point Lookout on July 17 (Wilson), and 3 on July 20 at Tower Gardens, where there were 5 on the 26th (Ricciardi). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was at Hart - Miller on June 1 (Ringler +), 2 were there on June 8 (Kaestner +) and 1 again on July 20 (Ringler +).

*Gulls.* Post-breeding concentrations of **Laughing Gulls** were 200 at Tanner's Creek in St. Marys County on July 17 (Wilson) and 1200 at Hart - Miller on July 20 (Ringler +). July 20 was also the date Stasz noted the first juvenile **Laughing Gull** in Calvert County, and 5 birds on July 22 in DC (Czaplak) were notable. **Franklin's Gulls** in first-summer plumage seen at Hart - Miller were 1 on June 1 (Stasz +), 2 on June 8 (Kaestner +) and 1 on July 13 (Blom +). A **Little Gull**, also in first-summer plumage, was at Hart - Miller, June 8-20 (Kaestner +), and up to 3 **Bonaparte's Gulls** remained there throughout the summer (many observers). Though Hart - Miller was the center of the summering **Ring-billed Gull** population with up to 1500 birds on July 20 (Ringler +) others include 3 immatures at Cambridge on June 25 (Wilson) and 1000 at DC on July 23 (Czaplak) at the other major summering location of this species. Post-breeding dispersal of juvenile **Ring-bills** occurred rather early as the first birds in this plumage were noted at Hart - Miller on July 5 (Ringler +), DC on July 10 (Czaplak) and Calvert County

on July 16 (Stasz). Wilson counted 357 **Herring Gulls** at Point Lookout on June 13 and Czaplak noted the first juvenile of this species at DC on July 22. A remarkable colony of Herring Gulls was established at Hart - Miller this summer where there were 3000 birds and 506 nests with eggs on June 15 (Blom +); however, very few of these eggs hatched and no young survived beyond the age of small downy birds less than a week old. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was also at Hart - Miller on June 15 (Blom +). The nest of a **Great Black-backed Gull** was also discovered at Hart - Miller and it contained 3 eggs on June 1 but was later found empty (Ringler +). Czaplak noted 3 **Great Black-backs** throughout the summer at DC and Wilson counted 21 at Point Lookout on June 13.

**Terns.** The only report of **Gull-billed Terns** was 2 at Barren Island on June 1 (H. Armistead). Though **Caspian Terns** do not breed in Maryland the peak count at Hart - Miller this summer was 200 on June 15 (Blom +). Possible migrant Caspians included 1 at Masonville on July 4 (Ringler), 52 on the Susquehanna Flats on July 12 (Kirkwood), and 3 at Liberty Reservoir on July 12 (Ringler), which is only the second record for inland Carroll County; the first juvenile was noted in Calvert County on July 19 (Stasz) and 4 were in DC on July 21 (Czaplak). **Royal Terns** were seen regularly at Ocean City and in the lower bay throughout the summer. Though they are known to nest nearby in Virginia, none have been found nesting in Maryland in recent years. Therefore the following sightings probably represent birds foraging far from the Virginia colonies: 6 at Point Lookout on June 13 (Wilson), 16 at Ocean City on June 15 with 12 there on the 21st and 16 on the 28th (Ringler), 1 at Lewis Wharf in Dorchester County on June 25 (Wilson), 5 at Long Point in Somerset County on June 28 (Ringler) and 12 in St. Marys County on July 17 (Wilson). A **Sandwich Tern** at Hart - Miller on June 6 (Kaestner +) was the farthest north in the bay that the species has occurred; 1 at Ocean City on July 30 (P. O'Brien) was less unusual. A **Common Tern** colony established at Hart - Miller included 180 birds and 53 nests with eggs on June 15 (Blom +); however, no young were ever seen. Nuttle counted 14 **Common Terns** at Denton on July 15 and Wilson estimated 100 in St. Marys County on July 17 as birds began to disperse from breeding colonies. From 20 birds at Hart - Miller on June 8, **Forster's Terns** had increased to 700 there on July 27 (Kaestner +); other reports were 1 at Choptank on June 19 and 2 there on June 30 (Engle), 6 at Elliott on June 26 (Wilson), 14 at Denton on July 15 (Hewitt), 45 at Rock Hall on July 15 (Gruber) and 8 in DC on July 16 (Czaplak). The high count of **Least Terns** at Hart - Miller was 200 on June 1 (Ringler +) and there were 4 downy young there on June 15 (Blom +). Other **Least Terns** were 5 at Choptank on June 18-19 (Engle), 15 on the Susquehanna Flats on July 12 (Kirkwood) and 4 at Rock Hall on July 17 (Gruber). Twenty miles east southeast of Ocean City 2 **Bridled Terns** were seen on the June 7 pelagic trip (Klockner +). Presumed spring migrant **Black Terns** were 1 at Barren Island on June 1 (H. Armistead) and 2 at Hart - Miller on June 15 (Blom +); presumed fall migrants were 3 in breeding plumage at Cuckold Point in Baltimore County on June 29 (Ringler +) and single birds at West Ocean City on July 16 and July 27 (Warfield).

**Cuckoo, Owl, Goatsuckers.** A **Black-billed Cuckoo** heard near South Point on June 28 (Ringler) was a rarity in Worcester County. A juvenile **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found in a backyard in Frederick on July 15 (Mrs. Beckham). The bird was taken to Margaret Donald and it was banded and later released. Nistico heard a **Chuck-will's-widow** at Accokeek in mid-June and 1 was at Denton on June 26 (Nuttle).

*Woodpeckers, Flycatchers.* A Red-headed Woodpecker at Hobbs on June 15 (Pepper) was unusual for Caroline County. Probable late spring Willow Flycatchers were single birds at Washington Creek in St. Marys County on June 13 (Wilson) and at Deal Island WMA on June 15 (Ringler); a probable breeding bird was 1 still singing at Fishing Creek Marsh in Calvert County on July 27 (Stasz +). Danny Bystrak saw a Western Kingbird in northern Carroll County while doing a Breeding Bird Survey route on June 12. Most spring Western Kingbirds seen in the east are during late May and early June. Reese estimated 15 Eastern Kingbirds at Tilghman on July 31 as fall migration had begun.

*Swallows, Wrens.* Tree Swallows were again using a bird house in Ocean City on June 28 (Ringler). Probable fall migrant Tree Swallows were 3 at Easton on June 28 (Ringler) and 10 at Jug Bay on July 13 (Mumford, Beaton). Other migrants at Easton on June 28 were 4 Northern Rough-winged Swallows and 8 Bank Swallows (Ringler). At Jug Bay, 5 Bank Swallows on June 13 (Mumford, Beaton) may have been from a nearby colony. New colonies of Cliff Swallows were discovered over the Middle Patuxent River on the Route 29 bridge (Burton Alexander) and (4 nests) at Lake Needwood in Montgomery County on June 21 (John Bjerke). A Sedge Wren was seen singing in the overgrown area of the exposed lakebed at Liberty Reservoir near Cold Saturday on July 24-25 and August 14 (Mark Wright).

*Waxwings, Vireos.* At Jug Bay there were 10 Cedar Waxwings on June 13 and 3 on July 13 (Mumford, Beaton). At Point Lookout there were 2 waxwings on June 13 (Wilson) and on July 27 3 were flying south over the mouth of the Potomac (Ringler). Wilson also noted single waxwings at Vienna on June 25 and in St. Marys County on Trent Hall Road on July 17. Thayer saw a Solitary Vireo feeding a fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird in Garrett County on the Youghiogheny River on August 8.

*Warblers.* A Magnolia Warbler at Jug Bay on June 13 (Mumford, Beaton) was an exceptionally late migrant. Czaplak heard a Blackburnian Warbler on June 15 on South Mountain along the Appalachian Trail near Gathland State Park where the species is a rare breeder. Some exceptionally late Blackpoll Warblers spilled over into the summer with a female banded at Stevenson on June 3 (Ross), a singing male at Lake Elkhorn on June 10 (Jim Hill), 1 heard in Timonium on June 13 (Kaestner) and a singing male on Gibson Island on June 21 (Ricciardi). Wilson observed an adult Prothonotary Warbler feeding a fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird on Griffith Neck Road in St. Marys County on June 25. A Swainson's Warbler was again heard at Mattaponi Landing on the Pocomoke on June 30 (David Shoch, Colin McAllister). A Canada Warbler at Chestertown on July 1; (Grubers) was extraordinary even for an early fall migrant.

*Dickcissels, Sparrows, Bobolinks.* Reports of Dickcissels were 1 at Hughes Hollow on June 5 (Gough) and 3 singing in southern Frederick County along Oland Road on June 16-20 (D. Wallace). A Savannah Sparrow at Cove Point on June 22 (Stasz) was also extraordinary. Wilson counted 13 Grasshopper Sparrows in St. Marys County on July 17. A Henslow's Sparrow was at Dan's Rock on June 8 (Kiddy) and 2 were heard at Elliott on June 25 (Wilson). Also at Elliott were 33 Sharp-tailed Sparrows on July 5 (Armisteads, Alice Jones). Summering non-breeding White-throated Sparrows were single birds at Hart - Miller on June 20 (Ringler, Joan McKiernan), singing at Fort Meade on

July 4 (Bystrak), singing at Masonville on July 4 (Ringler), and at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center on July 14 and August 1 (Bystrak). Sam Droege saw a **Dark-eyed Junco** along the Potomac River in Charles County near the Route 301 bridge on June 3 for another unusual summering record. Early fall **Bobolinks** included 10 flying over Tuckahoe Creek south of Ridgely on July 22 (M. O'Brien, Chan Robbins) and heard flying over North Beach on July 27 (Stasz, Ringler).

*3501 Melody Lane, Baltimore, MD 21207*



*Red-throated Loon in breeding plumage. Western Branch of Patuxent River, June 1, 1986. Photo by Greg Kearns.*

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